

Front Page	Back Page	Other Page
---------------	--------------	---------------

BUFFALO, N.Y.
NEWS

EVENING 285,024

MAR 12 1963

To Know or Not to Know

Chairman Mahon (D., Tex.) of the House Military Appropriations Subcommittee has criticized both the Administration and its Cuba critics for opening up our intelligence operations.

Almost daily statements about sensitive intelligence matters, says Mr. Mahon, have created a situation that is "outrageous and intolerable." "The Administration has mistakenly allowed itself to be goaded into revealing information detrimental to our best interests."

But for all his thundering indignation, the problem of military security in a democracy does not admit of simple conclusions. There are times, surely, when responsible officials armed with classified information—like Senator Keating last September—may feel it necessary to alert the public and press the Government to action. There are times, that is, when national security in the large may gainsay intelligence security in the small.

To say so much, however, is not to excuse all the revelations of our military intelligence systems that an urge either to defend or attack a given policy sometimes elicits. Was it necessary, for example, to reveal the precise Japanese codes broken in World War II, which normally would form the basis of their post-war successors, as was done in the various wrangles over Pearl Harbor? And after Gary Powers and the Bay of Pigs just about everybody must now know more about some of CIA's recruitment methods and operations than it was in the national interest to tell.

Perhaps one sound distinction that can be made is between secrecy for intelligence information and for underhand action. Everyone must agree not only that our own weaponry and military techniques should be locked up but also our systems for gathering information about others. Not only the data but its channels must be carefully guarded.

But military action by American operatives may get into a very different category. Even if it is the hush-hush CIA which performs the job, there can be national policy questions—with risk of larger U. S. involvement or of calculated effect on other governments—which belong in the open domain of policy discussion. What some "agents" are

getting the rest of us in for simply can not, in a democracy, always be permitted the sanctum of "security" closure. What our active policies are, or have been, in the Middle East or in Guatemala or the Dominican Republic, and certainly in peril-fraught Cuba, are for legislators and public alike to know.

To the degree to which the CIA, then, is merely an intelligence gathering organization, Mr. Mahon is quite right, and the less said about both its operations and what it has discovered the better. But the CIA as a department of overseas undercover operations is quite a different matter. Once one of those "tricks" has come to light, then both the purposes and modes of U. S. action are fit subjects both of disclosure and debate. What our agents were trying to do, and how well or badly they fared in the effort became everybody's business. And certainly there is no percentage at all in maintaining a purely hypothetical secrecy about a public action—in the Bay of Pigs or elsewhere—which is no longer a secret at all.